THE NEWS LETTER

OF THE COLLEGE ENGLISH ASSOCIATION

VOL. V, NO. 2 UNION COLLEGE : SCHENECTADY, N. Y. FEBRUARY, 1943

Fifth Annual Meeting

The College English Association met on Saturday, January 23rd, at the Hotel Edison in New York City to transact the necessary business of an annual meeting and to hear such discussions and addresses as had been planned by the program committee for the edification of the membership.

This meeting was originally scheduled for the Christmas holidays in the city of Washington. War conditions led the Modern Language Association to shift the meeting place to New York and the CEA planned to follow. Then increasing difficulties of transportation, followed by a direct appeal from the Office of Defense Transportation, induced the Modern Language Association to cancel its annual meeting altogether and the CEA to postpone its assemblage to January 23rd, and to announce that attendance of those living at any great distance from the New York area was not expected. With this understanding, the O.D.T. gave the meeting its blessing.

The condensation of a program planned for two days into a one-day affair meant practically one long session, beginning at 10 a. m. and ending, as it turned out, at 4:30 p. m. Approximately 90 arrived in the morning for all or part of the session, and 126, apart from guests of the association, are on record as sitting down to luncheon. The greater number of these stayed through until four o'clock, when the business meeting of enrolled members was called.

The Panel Discussion

What literary material is most profitable in the literature classroom in war-time or in peace? This far-reaching question was not narrowed by the chairman, since a panel discussion made it possible for any speaker to emphasize those aspects of the problem upon which he had most positive convictions. The old question, familiar to readers of the NEWS LETTER, as to whether contemporary literature should take up much classroom time as compared to the "classics" had its innings; the question as to whether we are best using our classroom hours in war-time by indoctrinating students with propaganda for democracy had its share of attention. Strang Lawson of Colgate, as chairman, called successively upon Atwood H. Townsend of New York University, Walter Pritchard Eaton of Yale University, William Rose Benet, poet, critic and editor, Dorothy Walworth Crowell, author of seven novels and critic of present-day education, and Fred B. Millett of Wesleyan University.

In the time remaining before luncheon, a number of teachers in the audience contributed to the discussion. More direct quotations from the panel will be found elsewhere in these columns.

The Luncheon

Shortly after one o'clock, the tables in the ballroom were all occupied. The discovery of a piano in one corner induced a search for someone to play the national anthem. Attention was centered upon the guest speaker, Dr. John Erskine, who protested that he had a sprained wrist. Despite that, he was persuaded to play with one hand. The guests rose and stood while Dr. Erskine discovered that the piano was almost hors de combat, some notes far out of tune and some wholly comatose. These facts are worthy of record, because with one hand and such a piano John Erskine found the chords and produced a result that brought a burst of deserved applause.

The secretary of the association, in the chair, called first upon Christopher Morley, who spoke without notes and with the intimate informality characteristic of him. Following his address, Professor Warfel read a letter typed that morning at the hotel by our retiring president, Howard Lowry, who was forced to return to Princeton to act as pall bearer at a funeral. He had taken an early morning train for New York, met members of the several committees at breakfast, wrote his salutation and regrets and was forced to leave again during the morning meeting. Following this message came the address of Dr. John Erskine, which will be distributed in due course to the members of CEA as a Chap Book.

Following Dr. Erskine came Harry Warfel with a report upon the present relationship between government and the college English teachers.

The Annual Business Meeting

A report was read by Professor Donald F. Connors of Fordham University on the present status of a manuscript compiled by George Reynolds of Colorado and an assisting committee, at the request of the annual meeting in December, 1941. A transcript of this report appears later.

The report of the nominating committee was read and approved and the following officers elected: President, Henry Seidel Canby, Yale; First Vice President, Edith M. Mirrielees, Stanford; Second Vice President, Robert M. Gay, Simmons College; Secretary, Burges Johnson, Union College; Treasurer, W. R. Richardson, William & Mary; Directors, Ross Taylor, U. of Wichita; Theodore Morrison, Harvard; Odell Shepard, Wesleyan Univ.

The President's Message

Fellow Members of the CEA, and Guests:

Your Secretary has graciously permitted me to leave for Princeton on an early train in order that I may attend the funeral of my friend and colleague Prof. Asher Hinds, a man who, as many of you know, was a rare example of that ideal of scholar and teacher esteemed by this association.

I am, of course, sorry to miss the luncheon and the afternoon meetings. I have, however, no misgivings about asking you to miss the usual presidential address. About this you should feel as John Ruskin did concerning his divorce: "I have many sorrows in my life, but this is not one of them." I trust that our guests on this occasion may feel free to add, indeed, to the remarks they had planned — that Mr. Morley, for example, if his speech has been timed by his usual sand-glass, may now be encouraged to add a little more sand. If, however, he and Mr. Erskine do take up some of the presidential slack, I hope they may do so with presidential gravity and wisdom.

I am grateful to many of you for the help you have given to the CEA this past year and particularly for your contributions to the NEWS LETTER. Like the past presidents of the Association I have learned that the life and soul of our enterprise is Burges Johnson; and I have a new appreciation of his contribution to us. My hope is that we may always keep the tone he has set for us from the start — the tone of a friendly, informal group with a minimum of apparatus, devoted to the strange but animating idea that the function of a teacher is to teach. This is a dream worth keeping alive, in peace or in war. Someday we may find it generally credited in our profession.

There is always a man from Portlock who comes to interrupt our dreams. This time he has come in very ugly form — in that of total war. While he remains we must treat him with strict attention. But he will depart in time and will hardly take with him all the bright images of our profession. Let us even in the emergency before us, strive to keep some of those images alive. I have always felt that a teacher of English had at bottom only one problem — that of keeping time to read the books of high imagination that probably made him want to be a teacher of English in the first place. His other problem is to pass them on to somebody else. I honor the CEA because it believes that these prime vocations of the teacher, in spite of the many conspiracies against them, do not deserve to be outmoded.

Thank you again, and best wishes for a good day.

Howard Lowry.

Accelerated English

(Christopher Morley's address as most charmingly but inadequately reported by Mr. Morley.—Ed.)

("Truly I felt disappointed and ashamed that I was so unsuccessful in the struggle to bring back alive some of the bugs that were bustling in my skull. Indeed I lay awake that night, perpending my failure, but then in morning air I concluded that perhaps a group of literary students would forgive the outward and visible signs of the interior dementias that sometimes are the preliminary oscillations of the mental balance!" — C. M.)

* * *

I think I was trying to say something like this: The world at present is concerned with technology; but we must remember that many of the greatest discoveries of science have been intuitively suggested or hinted beforehand in literature. Examples, plucked wildly at random, were Virgil's phrase "conscious aether" or Coleridge's lines exactly divining what we now call the streamline principle, or even the Pardoner's Tale's suggestion of strategy for dealing with the three men of sin, Hitler, Hirohito, and Musso. All this was not merely fanciful, I most positively believe that occasionally and by those lightning-stroke accidents which are the property of the arts the armed service may find in some innocent poet, painter or musician the idea of its tactics or its secret weapons.

It is our duty as students of literature to keep people aware that (as my friend Fuller, of the Board of Economic Welfare, has put it) "man's only key to wealth is his access to mind." Literature, of course, is processed mind; and I agreed that just now we had better limit ourselves to the prime movers, the great dynamos of the arts where we are most likely to find the suggestions we need. The preoccupation with science in recent years has been the behaviorism of the elements (chemical) and surely the preoccupation of literature has always been the behaviorism of the mind. A great powerhouse (like Chaucer, Shakespeare, Milton or whoever) will not "falsen his mateere" any more than the physicist in the laboratory.

I think I proceeded from there by my own naive doctrine of radiant energy. I said that the most intelligent way to accelerate is to beg a lift from some faster traveler who is going there anyway. This is the principle, as I understand it, of radio communication where a slow-moving agitation (sound) is given a ride on a wave of spectacular agility — and I say spectacular literally, since it moves at the speed of light. But what causes that almost unbe-

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THE NEWS LETTER

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Membership in the College English Association, including THE NEWS LETTER, $2.00 a year. Subscription for Libraries, $1.50.

Editorial

The College English Association from its beginning has felt that it would be well to increase the contact between its membership and men and women accomplished in the field of authorship, and also those who are trained in literary criticism. Teachers, too, must be discerning critics. We dare assert that the answers of such people to our immediate questions are more likely to be sensible than any proposed by military or naval men—unless they happen to have been teachers themselves before they entered service.

This, then, is a good time to emphasize the natural relationship between the writers and the teachers of literature; and it is especially appropriate for the College English Association to choose as its president for this current year a man eminent both as teacher and writer, and at the same time editor of a widely respected critical review.

Members of CEA in good standing will please feel no annoyance if they find a return envelope addressed to the Treasurer, suggesting that payment of dues would be welcome. These envelopes have been enclosed with all copies of the paper. If they do not mean you, please pass them along to a non-member as a hint that his name would be a welcome addition to our fellowship.

While friendly and encouraging words addressed to your Secretary-editor are fully appreciated and more than welcome, it must be understood that letters for publication omit personalities, and the Editor reserves the right to make all communications conform to a certain pattern of salutation, and to delete as necessity requires. If this be treason to one of the four freedoms, make the most of it! This editorial rule as a protective device works both ways, sparing the editor the necessity of printing personal attacks, etc., upon himself and the other officers. Our retiring President has violated this rule, bringing undue pressure to bear in order to do so. Though the Secretary is fully appreciative of his kind words—never again!

But it is appropriate in this place to express the gratitude of all who enjoyed the New York meeting to the committee which did such an effective piece of work. The local committee, under Miss Mary A. Wyman of Hunter College, made all advance arrangements and then organized itself into a social committee to see that those who came met one another; and one member, Donald L. Clark of Columbia, did heroic work not only in collecting reservations for the luncheon in advance, but in keeping accounts straight and settling the bills afterward. The Program Committee provided a fine list of speakers who all appeared on time; and its chairman, Strang Lawson of Colgate, acted as chairman of the morning meeting and Atwood H. Townsend of New York University served on the panel. Our hearty thanks to them all!

Dear Editor:

Percival Hunt's "A Teacher" in THE NEWS LETTER for January struck me as being worth a subscription; so I am mailing mine today.

Why so many references in THE LETTER intimating that English teachers have to apologize for their subject? In a former issue I noted that same feeling. Are we especially blessed in our college? We have renewed interest in the subject. Students are enrolling for more and more English, and are coming to us with a more serious mind than ever before. I have more majors than I had a year ago, although our enrollment has dropped. In fact, we have added an extra teacher in the department.

Very truly yours,
C. T. Ryan,
State Teachers Coll.,
Kearney, Neb.

Dear Editor:

This is to thank the CEA for the delightful meeting we had in New York this past week-end. I have been renewed in spirit, and in faith for the tasks ahead of me this year. My faculty gathered for a report of the meeting Monday evening, and I had to leave out so much that meant something to us who were present.

The NEWS LETTER is good and I receive many helpful suggestions from it.

Personally I rather like CEA without MLA as it was this year. You are right about our becoming better acquainted with each other.

Ivar L. Myhr,
Hollins College, Va.

What Are We For?

Let us all recognize one thing, whether we like it or not. For most Freshmen the serious study of "English" begins and will continue to begin in college. Careful reading of literary works and directed practice in simple, coherent prose, to say nothing of more advanced study, have increasingly less place (or none) in the secondary education of this country; and the school officials offer good reasons why such work is largely inappropriate for them. But their arguments do not apply to the better selected and more mature students in college. Under the present circumstances, however, if we can persuade the schools to provide their graduates with a good knowledge of fundamental grammar and some practice in elementary composition, we shall have done well; and if we are to continue our honored position in the curriculum, we must set a goal suitable for our students as we find them.

Unless the ideal of literacy and a knowledge of literature is to be dropped entirely as a mark of education, it is obvious that for students with so little previous preparation, one year of college training is not enough. If they must be taught to read and to write with any facility, and made familiar with the literature in their language, they will need at least a two year coordinated course, with continued supervision thereafter. They must be divided so that the weakest students will move more slowly, but almost all will need a great deal of detailed assistance in writing and reading. The lecture, literary history except as it helps the teacher with his specific explanation, and the study of works chiefly for their historical interest, are of dubious value for freshmen and sophomores, and probably for all undergraduates. Let us also admit that the aesthetic approach antagonizes many students, and let us choose our readings with care. But let us beware the myth that the humanities are merely decorative, and let us doubly beware teaching that tends to make them so.

It may be said, what is new here? Nothing, perhaps, in theory, but in how many departments is the big job accepted and gone at enthusiastically, with administrative support and reward? In how many is the vision not directed beyond the horizon to the specialized course for devotees, and to publication as the basis for promotion? In how many has there not been a grudging acceptance of pure utility as the end? If our value and our ideals are currently questioned, to what extent are we ourselves responsible?

The very existence of C.E.A. proclaims a widespread discontent among English teachers with certain tendencies in the profession. We are against the utilitarian ideal of education and we are for literacy and a knowledge of literature. More than that, we are for emphasizing the value of good teaching, directed toward giving undergraduates an understanding of important literary works. We deplore tendencies to talk about books rather than to read them, to deal in generalities rather than with the work at hand, to regard as "infra dig" teaching that meets students more or less on their own level in an attempt to make what they read intelligible to them, to substitute our scholarly games for helpful interpretations. Finally, we cannot overstate our feeling that time, and patience, and skill, and experience are essential in teaching students a serviceable prose style.

Our Association and our Newsletter serve as a clearing house for our views on these matters, and for testimony on effective methods. But are discussion and affirmation of our faith among ourselves enough to make good principles prevail? Can C.E.A. serve its members and the humanities better than by providing vision and leadership in reestablishing our subject matter effectively and appropriately after the present moratorium has been lifted? Widespread discussion of purposes and means is always to be desired, but should we not now look for formulating a brief and positively stated policy for which we can stand? We must, moreover, have a greatly increased membership, probably organized into regional sections, to spread the word effectively. We should also be determined that in each college with C.E.A. members, the ideals of the Association will have vigorous and continued expression. Newspapers, presidents, boards, and educational associations should hear of us and our purposes. Finally we should be noted for good works as well as faith. The opportunity lies before us. English Composition and English Literature are not the only roads to liberal culture, but they are good ones. Let us pave them with something more than good but futile intentions.

—R. T. F.

New

A College Developmental Reading Manual

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THIS reader contains thirty-one graded lessons which carry the student through the five fundamentals of reading proficiency. The practice selections are from college-level books; the exercises are carefully tested. The lessons are thorough enough and long enough to establish firmly the drill skills.

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The Panel Discussion

What Literary Material Is Most Profitable Now?

In opening discussion Dr. Lawson said that the topic seemed to indicate a problem in the equilibrium of heterogeneous substances. Did our terms imply a difference of kind, value, or interest? Why were we uneasy about the relative importance of classical and contemporary literature? Was this simply an academic question, or could answers to it lead us a little nearer agreement about the proper study of English? He suggested that for the moment we were concerned not so much with personal tastes as with pedagogy. With the teaching of English receding in the face of the war, he thought the members of the panel might wish to discuss, among other things, the vitalizing of College English in the post-war world. To avoid intramural contest over definitions, Dr. Lawson suggested that we take "classical literature" to mean good writing done in past generations—roughly, up to the end of the nineteenth century, and "contemporary literature" to mean writing done since then.

WALTER PRITCHARD EATON said he did not see how it is possible to teach the literature of the present without first teaching something of the literature of the past. But the object of teaching the past to undergraduates is primarily to enable them to form a background of taste and judgement so they may better appreciate and enjoy their contemporary literature and society. The teacher should relate the classic to the contemporary, and not boast that he himself has not progressed beyond Jane Austen. His object should be to make appreciative readers, not little replicas of doctorial candidates. Mr. Eaton declared that "the whole machinery of so called research scholarship" in literature should be thrown out of the window in undergraduate teaching. He pointed out that in England a symposium had disclosed that war time reading for spiritual refreshment most often turned to Wordsworth. If, as Justice Frankfurter recently said, "we must build on what experience has vindicated, and not start as though chaos were our heritage," here the teacher has a chance to show how experience has vindicated Wordsworth, to show how and why, to relate a past literature to the present. A teacher who knows only Wordsworth is probably unfit to teach Wordsworth —outside of a graduate school.

DOROTHY WALWORTH contributed epigrammatic bits of wisdom which were, unfortunately, not caught on a stenographer's notebook. She herself writes that the manuscript which lay before her on the table "was only a sheaf of good intentions. I never said a word that was on it. You may quote me as saying that I feel that students nourished only on contemporary authors would starve to death spiritually, because contemporary authors have so little wisdom, writing as they do in a negation age, an age of doubt and confusion. I do sincerely believe that fifty years from now Hemingway will survive only as a footnote in a scholarly work on sleeping bags. Let us wait and see."

When it was pointed out to Mrs. Crowell that she herself had committed seven contemporary novels and was as inconsistent as William Rose Benet in urging greater attention to the writers of the past, she remarked that some of her books she was sorry now she had written and only one of them, "The Feast of Reason" deserved attention in a college classroom. She said that we might think of literature as a tree which could have some of its little and livelier branches lopped off without harm to it, and perhaps to its advantage; but it would be unwise to lop off the trunk.

WILLIAM ROSE BENET discussed the literature most suitalbe for study in war-time, and called attention to the fact that the cadet corps at West Point must become acquainted with modern poetry. Mr. Benet was scheduled to lecture there not so long ago,—an engagement arranged before Pearl Harbor, — and was surprised to learn that they still wished him to speak, and still wished him to stick to poetry as his subject. He calls our attention to the fact that the army colonel who edits 'The Infantry Journal', speaking at a recent panel discussion in New York most warmly advocated the study of good literature in wartime. "I am solidly of the opinion," says Mr. Benet, "that we should keep the flag flying, the flag of the liberal arts. It is one of the things we are fighting for." But Mr. Benet has reported more fully his part in the CEA panel discussion in his department "The Phoenix Nest" in The Saturday Review.

In bringing the symposium to a close, Professor Millett pointed out that, although the participants had agreed on the definition of "classical" literature, they had failed to distinguish between two kinds of "contemporary" literature, namely, the literature contemporary with the professor and the literature contemporary with the student. It was of the use of the second type of contemporary literature that he felt it important to speak.

For the very limited use of such literature in the classroom, he suggested the following reasons: the crowded state of the English curriculum, the professor's uncertainty as to what contemporary literature is worth reading, the fairly common notion that such literature is dangerous, the teacher's distaste for "getting up" modern authors, the specialist's absorption in his field of research, and, above all, the professional unwillingness to face the critical problems raised by current literature. Professor Millett argued, however, that there are weighty reasons why an attempt should be made to circumvent these obstacles; the pertinence of the problems, situations, and characters in contemporary literature to students living in the current state of culture, its imaginative accessibility and intelligibility to them (even more than to their academic elders), and the challenge it offers to straight and independent critical thinking.

He maintained that the problem of choosing between classical and contemporary literature and also the problem of the evaluation of both these bodies of literature could be solved by the substitution, for the usual literary-historical attack, of the critical-analytical attack. The widespread manifestation of this process of substitution —a process influenced by such diverse thinkers as Groce, Richards, Ransom, and Hutchins and paralleled in the study of the fine arts and music is the most promising development in the contemporary teaching of literature. He pointed out that it is not only possible and desirable but eminently profitable to make intensive analyses of such specific works of art as Donne's "The Anniversary" and Eliot's "The Hippopotamus," without the introduction of historical considerations. "The return to the text," Professor Millett concluded, "is the surest weapon available in the eternal war against pedants, irresponsible aesthetes, and professional scholars. Its quintessential value is that it brings the student into immediate and intimate contact with particular works of art and trains him in the kind of behavior appropriate to a perceptive and cultivated person in that situation. It is the clearest road to the kinds of value in which the humanities are particularly rich, the values of fidelity to the fact, of discrimination and judgment, and of those deeper and richer values of which the arts are the respository — beauty, goodness, and truth."

Dear Editor:

I have the feeling that Professor Robert T. Fitzhugh, in his article "The Humanities—Yes!", in the December NEWS LETTER, and in a lesser degree Professor Norman Foerster in the implications of his address of December, 1941, are unnecessarily severe in their strictures regarding college teachers of English.

Professor Fitzhugh would have us believe that the rank and file of these lack ordinary gumption, and do not know a genuine thing when they see it. The condition he sets forth of general unpreparedness of students, through vaporousness in their language knowledge, and what not, for the manifold sweetnesses and lights in literature, is painfully a fact; but it is just as true that, after students have arrived in college more or less completely unformed, it is then too late to transmute them into votaries of the humanities. Angels and ministers of grace would fail in such a task.

Something must be done to bring about a better language-learning status in the lower schools, and a first essential in such a project is that English and foreign language professors join hands, hearts, and minds to prevail upon the proper headquarters to establish more languages than just English alone for hard study in the high school by all who expect admittance into higher English in college, or into any other higher language and literary work there. Another first essential is that the English-teaching fraternity itself, through its most influential spokesmen, take the lead.

A beginning in this direction has been made. See the address of Professor Karl Young, as published in the 1940 supplement of the Publications of the Modern Language Association, pp. 1329-1342. (I wonder how many professors of English have read this.) And see also the essay, Shall We Be More Practical?", from the pen of Professor Robert A. Hume, printed in School and Society for January 2, 1943.

A. M. Withers,
Concord State Teachers College.

NOTICE

Now is the time when there is greatest need for our guild of college English teachers to be strong and effective. Help us by joining. Send $2 to the Treasurer, giving full name and teaching position; or $1 for a half-year enrollment.

The Passionate Soul To Its Maker

Come live with me and be my love
And we will all the pleasures prove
That men have wanted, since the fall
Stilled Eve's and Adam's madrigal.

And I will show you rows of books,
Adding machines and office nooks
Where man records what man owes man
Beneath the cool, electric fan.

And we will pass along the street
Where upturned palms before our feet
Shall flourish from the gutter's scum
Marking our triumph in the slum.

Then through the smoke-pall we will go
And ponder on the dynamo,
Or watch the uniformed police
Subdue the strikers, keep the peace.

And we will walk amidst the war
And see the fighters near and far
Write honor's name against the foe
On desert sands and melting snow.

But we will roam no fields and streams
Where Colin smiles in idle dreams,
Nor hear his pipe along the dale
Rival the love-lorn nightingale.

Forgive, O Lord, if I lament
The things with which my life is spent,
But live with me and be my love
And all these things will pleasures prove.

—Louis Hasley,
Notre Dame Univ.

English For War Needs

The need of English composition in this war is obvious, for it is a long-distance war. The messenger to Garcia with his oral instructions is dead. Now words speed by airplane, cable and radio, and they should be as compact and exact as in the greatest sonnet.

But the need of literature (in the limited sense of "belles lettres") may be less obvious. We should have a balanced literary diet with three ingredients: today's events, a background for coping with these events, and an escape from them.

Of these three, the literature of today's events is least important. Many of our authors are writing from limited individual experience or even at second hand. ("The Moon is Down".) Governments and publishers suppress or censor unfavorable pages. The author's own bias distorts his picture, and the demand for quick publication causes hasty writing. Ignorance, censorship, bias and haste keep most of today's best-selling war books from being either truth or literature.

One of the errors of the First World War was the emphasis on curent books in the SATC reading. The shelves were filled with Arthur Guy Empey, Alan Seeger, and the atrocities of Newell Dwight Hillis. Even before the peace was signed, they were returned to the shelves to gather dust.

It is doubtful whether four novels of any enduring value appeared in the United States in 1917 and 1918. The most likely candidates are "My Antonia", "The Magnificent Ambersons", and "The Three Black Pennys." None of them dealt even remotely with the war, and none was required reading in the colleges. Let us profit by this experience and hold our reading of the literature of today's events to a minimum.

The second ingredient in our wartime diet is more important: a good background for understanding and coping with today's events. Literature is superior to history in providing this, for the latter is too impersonal, too compressed, and too lacking in climax. Thus Tolstoi's "War and Peace" becomes a best-seller, and the distant lands of Melville, Kipling and Conrad spring into prominence.

Even more important than such geographical coincidences are psychological and philosophical parallels. The soldier who is armed with a few sentences from Lincoln and the Bible, a few lines of Shakespeare and Housman, may the better keep his sanity in prison or on a raft at sea.

The third ingredient is escape. Our normal refuges (travel, movies, liquor) have been greatly reduced. Middletown's pet possession, the automobile, has turned into a white elephant. But there's still no frigate like a book to take us lands away. The countries of the mind are not ringed with forts and mines, nor dimmed by black-outs.

The task of the English teacher is to make these second and third ingredients available. We must give up our research into the sources of the classics, and devote ourselves to connections between the classics and today. We must become railroad men, routing in trains from Concord and Stratford and routing out escape trains to Combray or Shangri La.

On our shelves are stimulants and drugs for men who enter battle or who lie in hospitals, for lonely sentries and crowded city workers, for people isolated on farms and people deafened by the roar of factories, for soldiers to whom nobody writes and for relatives who brood over the government notice, 'Missing'. If we can find the right stimulants or the right anodynes, we'll be as essential to the war effort as the mathematicians and the doctors.

—W. L. Werner,
Pa. State College.

Morley Is Right

(An editorial in the "Cleveland Plain Dealer", Jan. 26)

Chris Morley, whilom skipper of the lamented three-hours-for-lunch club, Vesey Street's second most important institution in the days when the New York Post was literary as well as literate, comes forth with the idea that the war would be won sooner if the leaders of the United Nations would read the classics of English literature in their spare moments.

This proposal, so startling in contrast to the notion that only the boys with a test tube or a micrometer can win battles, is worthy of a moment's consideration. We do not believe that the honest Chris made the assertion only to please members of the College English Association whom he was addressing. Chris was never one to avoid an unpopular sentence if he thought that, to respect fidelity, it should be uttered. Patently he made the statement because he believes it.

"If you have time for nothing else," he said, "listen to what Chaucer, Matthew Arnold and Rudyard Kipling have to say about our immediate problems."

Paradoxical as this may sound, the truth is that the great writers of English verse and prose have much to say about today's issues. This is a war between two civilizations—that which we call western, dedicated to the evolution of the individual, the fruition of efforts of past societies, and the totalitarian which is the negation of the western, the civilization which would discard all history and heritage and make man a robot.

The writers whom Morley named, and scores more that any high school boy could enumerate, were concerned with the preservation and the promotion of the fundamental ideas of western civilization. They gave literary form to all the ideals for which we stand and for which we are fighting today. A return to them in this time of crisis is a distinct fillip to morale, a guaranty of victory.

One of the strains in Prime Minister Churchill which makes him an effective war leader is his sound grounding in the classics of Anglo-Saxon literature. Not only his entertaining turn of phrase, but his incisive turn of mind which inspires a nation stem from this heritage. The rest of us could profit by this example. This is what Morley meant in his statement. We think he is right. We should take time to learn who and what we are from the fathers of the pen.

World Literature In War and Peace

It is natural in time of war that colleges should adapt their literature courses to the crisis at hand. As we all know, however, the crisis will extend far beyond the winning of the war. When the bombers cease to fly and the battleships to plough the seas, problems will remain which will tax man's ingenuity to the limit. Men and women with the right kind of technical training will help solve these problems; but as the years pass, those who will do most to keep the world at peace will be those who have a sympathetic understanding of the cultures and customs of men in all the nations of the earth.

Only about one-third of the colleges of the United States offer a course in comparative literature or world literature. I am interested chiefly in world literature for the undergraduate. In spite of the fact that a world literature course merely touches the fringes of world thought from Homer to the present day, I believe that such a course may have value for the student for a number of reasons. First, all good literature has meaning for the living of life. Students must be made conscious of the struggles and achievements of the human race in nations other than England and the United States. Too often their knowledge of the literature of the non-English speaking world is almost negligible. Though they may pursue one or two foreign languages, undergraduates, as a rule, read little of the literature of foreign lands in language classes. How few learn to read Greek! But they may learn what the Greeks were like through English translations of their epic and lyric poetry, their dramas, and their philosophy. They may learn of Dante's spiritual struggle, of his conception of the medieval church, and also his dissension from some of the views of that church. They may see how Nietzsche's Superman helped pave the way for Hitler's frenzy over Nordic supremacy and for the submission of the masses to a leader who does all their thinking for them. Students may also see another phase of German culture in the novels of Thomas Mann or in the work of earlier writers like Goethe and his contemporaries. Goethe makes Faust a scholar whose ambition and daring are laudable; and in the end, in spite of error and disaster, these qualities lead him to happiness and peace. Students should know all these writers.

Another need for the world literature course is that many pieces of English and American literature are unintelligible, or nearly so, unless the student has read the source material. Shelley's Prometheus Unbound becomes meaningful to one who has read Aeschylus. It is for this reason that we have the world literature course in the sophomore year. It is required of English majors. Many others elect it. It does not include English or American authors, for they are studied in period courses in the senior college.

World literature may be studied also for its aesthetic value. An appreciation of good drama may be found in a study of Sophocles as well as of Shakespeare, or of the novel in the work of Balzac as well as of Henry James.

There are many excellent world literature texts for college classes. I prefer those which have complete or almost complete units and only representative selections from different periods. However, I often wish for more Oriental material. We need to know China, Japan, and India better than we do. The problem, of course, is what to exclude when there is so much from which to choose.

Writers like Goethe may require considerable interpretation for sophomores. So also do Milton and Browning and Whitman. I would not have any of the first rank British or American authors omitted from our literature courses, but I do think there is a place in the English curriculum for literature in translation. Our field is the world. How long will English departments continue to leave great areas of that field untilled?

Emeline L. Welsh,
Northern State Teachers College
Aberdeen, South Dakota.

Makers of Naval Tradition By Carroll Storrs Alden, former head of the department of English, history and government, United States Naval Academy, and Ralph Earle, late rear admiral, United States Navy, and president of Worcester Polytechnic Institute. Revised and continued by C. S. Alden. Ginn & Co. 378 pages. Illustrated. $2.40.

The announcement by an official in the Navy Department that officers in training were encouraged to read stories of naval heroes and records of the American Navy was bound to end in productive results in the field of textbook publication. One of the first is this revision of a conveniently sized volume that has been standard for a number of years. The revision adds new material on the first World War with a biography of Admiral Simms; also an account of our forces at Pearl Harbor and of the Marines at Wake Island. The older material includes, of course, biographical essays on Admirals Luce and Sampson and such early figures as John Paul Jones, Macdonough, Maurey and Porter. The style is matter-of-fact and a bit plodding at times, but the material is all there and the book is well adapted to a sailor's kit as well as the classroom.

English Departments and Government Plans

A concensus among military men and educators in Washington is that, because of the technological nature of the present war, English departments must become service organizations teaching the utilitarian aspects of our subject. Some shrinkage and a reshaping of course offerings are inevitable. Each department must meet its problems in the light of local conditions. Technological institutions will be slightly affected. Woman's colleges will make few changes, except those which bring departmental activities into harmony with the goals of the War Manpower Commission, such as the training of teachers, nurses, and social workers. Co-educational colleges will still have women to fill advanced classes in English, but some curtailment may be advisable in the light of trends in registration and of manpower requirements. Men's liberal arts colleges may expect the disappearance of the upper division; except for students under 18 years of age and for those classified as II-B and IV-F there will be few registrants for courses in English beyond the second year. Of the dozens of specialized military training courses likely to utilize college plants, almost none will require courses in English.

Great interest has been focused upon the use of the civilian faculty members by the program announced jointly by the Army and Navy on December 17, 1942. This new program has no relationship to students now in college, who are urged to remain in classes until regularly called. High school graduates between 17 and 22, who have passed screen examinations and have made application, may be transferred to a college after 13 weeks of basic military training. Of the 1,717 institutions of higher learning, some 200 to 300 are to be utilized in a democratic educational search for technological and scientific talent among enlisted and drafted men. The curriculum will include English, an historical background of the war, mathematics, and physics. Institutions will probably not be militarized as in 1918; chief emphasis will be upon the educational program.

The course in English will probably include a review of fundamentals, the reading of utilitarian prose, the writing of reports and military correspondence, and considerable work in speech. As is true at West Point and Annapolis, English may serve as an integrating subject. Papers prepared in other courses may be read by the English staff; history essays and English papers may become identical.

"One thing I should like to see emphasized," said one educator, "is that the person in charge of the English course at a particular institution should be one sympathetic to its aims, agreeable to 'practical' composition, ingenious enough to prepare materials, and personally able to meet the people from the other courses, including mathematics and physics, so that the courses can be somewhat coordinated. Also he should not be so overloaded with actual teaching that he won't have time to go around to other courses or to prepare materials. The man who has been in charge of the existing freshman course should not be given the job ex-officio."

There is evidence that September, 1943, will see the largest total freshman class (including the Army and Navy groups) in the history of American collegiate education. Most of the students under 18 will wish to take preinduction courses similar to the Army and Navy programs. It is apparent that many English departments will be in the position of teaching Freshman English (or its military equivalent) and little else. Wise administrators are making adjustments in personnel in such a way as to maintain their organizations against the day when the rush back to college sets in. At that time a generation oversupplied with technological information will crave the humanizing influences of the liberal arts.

The problem of securing employment for some college teachers may arise. Many will enter active service with the armed forces, take places in government or industry, or prepare themselves to teach elementary mathematics or meteorology. The Division of Inter-American Affairs, Office of Education, is sending teachers of English to Latin America. The Association of American Colleges has a committee working on the problem of the re-employment of teachers.

For the moment literature is in eclipse as a college subject. Yet never greater was the need for spiritual sustenance as provided by great books. Through personal counseling we can bring a knowledge of these writings to our students. Our research and writing must continue. Altered conditions must not dismay us. We are ready to serve wherever duty calls. Our faith shall not falter.

Harry R. Warfel,
University of Maryland.

Spelling, Punctuation & Co.

We have heard stories from time to time of how failure to write or speak clearly has interfered with the progress of military operations. This is symptomatic of the ever intenser spotlight our advent into the war is directing upon courses in composition, which, if hostilities endure long enough, will be all one may reasonably expect to salvage from the English end of a rationed liberal arts curriculum. With this spotlight, the ancient argument between the grammarians and what may be called the soul-communicators has awakened in its old fury.

Since the end of the first World War, the grammarians have been slowly losing ground, what with progressive education and a general disillusionment as to pre-war methods and ideals. The Nineteen-Thirties, dominated as they were by the Depression and the Nazis, made grammar and drillmastering more remote than ever from the obvious realities of life. But having survived for some twenty-five hundred years, grammar and its formalistic allies in composition, though in retreat, maintained themselves, husbanded their resources, and patiently awaited better times.

There is growing evidence that these better times are arriving. If we are now to prepare our young men and women for employment in the "Drafting of Communiques" departments of our armed services, teach them to write clear, incisive dispatches on the field of battle, train them to bear the enormous burden of paper work generated by the war, then grammar, structure, and denotative words inevitably become the primary items on the agenda. With their advance, there will be an equally inevitable recession of mood, atmosphere, connotative diction, and poetic prose. The droves of teachers who openly or privately cannot endure the teaching of composition under the most favorable circumstances will be forced to tighten their literary belts and dig in for the duration. Ironically, with the almost total demise of Latin and the classical tradition will come a resurgence (however temporary) of Grammar, Rhetoric, Logic, and the medieval tradition.

Listening once again to the contentions of both sides in the tug-of-war over how a freshman can be taught the power of expression is to reaffirm the old conviction that both sides are trimphantly right and magnificently wrong. Even the apostles of the "enthusiastic" theme do not deny that intellectual clarity cannot be detached from agreement, tense, the possessive case, and parallel structure. All but a very few of the nineteenth century die-hards will admit, however grudgingly, that a student deeply absorbed in what he has to say can ride roughshod over Spellings, Punctuation & Company, and still make his ideas felt. In these arguments, they are of course both right. But when each invokes the doctrine of mutual exclusiveness, — one insisting that corect writing is dull and not worth doing, and in any case correctness and grammar are sure to be developed in the course of time (through spontaneous combustion apparently)—the other contending that writing which is merely enthusiastic encourages mental flabbiness and vagueness and is in any case no preparation for "life" —then both are manifestly in error.

In actuality, the two kinds of writing, the two approaches, are indissolubly wedded, though history has proven this among the least happy of marriages. The most perfervid writers, short of the Joycean demi-monde, cannot dispense with grammar; the student or teacher who relies wholly upon it is living in an ivory tower which has not even the virtue of being aesthetically attractive. Willy-nilly, grammar is one of many indispensable ways of maturing undergraduate communication. If the present emergency demands more and more of those particular types of communication in which grammar is the most useful catalytic agent, then those among us who have fought its encroachments will grit their teeth and make the adjustment. It will be an integral part our professional contribution to the war effort.

Leo Gurko, Hunter College.

Notice

The address of John Erskine, "What Should English Teachers Teach?", will appear in the near future as a Chap Book to be distributed to members. Others may purchase copies so long as the edition lasts.

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ACCELERATED ENGLISH

(Continued from Page 1)

lievable outflow of conscious ether? It is a sort of uncertainty and despair. The electrons are tortured to and fro in an alternating current of such merciless frequency that they don't know where they're going and try to go everywhere at once. Then we climb on their fleeing shoulders and take a ride.

I can well understand that all this, on a Saturday afternoon, might sound like lunacy; and yet how much of literature does. And, as I strove miserably to apologize, it should not be too inapropos in a hotel named Edison?

The most exciting and practical discoveries of humankind admittedly came about by accident, and where but in literature is man so luckily exposed to the accidental thoughts he perhaps had not earned and did not expect? I made one more apology, I remember saying that parables of this kind were hardly amenable to impromptu discussion, they were like the translucent nethergear of Van Raalte, advertised as "so sheer they can't be photographed." But I did feel that possibly students of literature, beset by uncertainty like that alternating current, might develop a kind of induced radioactive resonance. In sum, as Chaucer said in the least minor of his minor poems,

"Hold the high way and let
thy ghost thee lead
And Truthe shall deliver, it
is no drede."

The Golden Hind. An Anthology of Elizabethan Prose and Poetry. Selected and Edited by Roy Lamson and Hallet Smith. Published by W. W. Norton and Company, N. Y.

Mr. Lamson and Mr. Smith, the editors of this volume of Elizabethan prose and verse, have proved their understanding of the requisites of a good title: brevity, appropriateness, power to arouse the imagination and the memory. Around its poetic title, The Golden Hind, cluster all the concepts and activities of the days of Gloriana, the quickened life of a nation reborn, the eagerness for strange new tidings of nautical, military and scientific conquests, the yearnings of a lusty young nation to explore new continents not only beyond the Atlantic but in the mind of man himself. The Golden Hind is more than the name of a vessel, it is a symbol of the fruitful activities of these Renaissance days.

The new volume adequately fulfils the promise of this manysided symbol. Within the limits of its space and chronology, the specimens chosen represent Elizabethan life: its literary art, social conditions, geographical interest and even the transitory eccentricities, tastes and fads. The editors, moreover, have greatly helped in this evocation of the past with compact, informative essays of their own that illuminate the authors and their era. At the foot of each beautifully printed page they have placed helpful notes and after each section, labyrinthine colophons, designs, in some instances, for Elizabethan mazes or knot gardens. They have appended a genealogical table of Elizabeth and her friends and also a chronological table of English and foreign literature as well as contemporary events of importance in history, religion, politics and science between 1550 and 1603.

Within this period was living another typical Elizabethan who contributed greatly to the life of these tumultuous days, — Sir Francis Bacon. Even though his strenuous career may have deferred the publishing of most of his writings until after 1603, he is, nevertheless, as typical of his age as Thomas Dekker. Mention of this omission here might seem caviling had not the editors themselves stated in the preface that they have at times stepped over their "Chronological Boundaries."

Did not The Golden Hind stand for exploration in every sense of the word to Sir Francis Bacon? On the title page of his "Instauratio magna" is a magnificent circumnavigating galleon like Drake's. It is passing from the safer waters through the Gates of Hercules, bravely nosing its way into the bevexed Atlantic, and thence on to the unknown. Below this symbolic picture is written in Latin the motto, "Many shall pass through and knowledge shall be increased." Had this great explorer in the realms of thought no scrap of prose to contribute to The Golden Hind?

Raymond Herrick,
Union College.

ON A COLLEGE CLASSROOM

I sit in this bleak room, all soil and age,
And watch a winter sun through dust-filmed glass
Reach to the window-sill, and drop and pass,
As quick to perish as the scholar's page:
There is the don's poor unpretentious stage,
Where he has struck his learning's sea-voiced brass
To haunt the elder hours of a class
Whose minds his mind has sweated to engage;
And here the ancient chairs where they have sat,
Where they sit still, under Arcadian suns
Unperished in imperishable skies:
Here, here horizons curve that once were flat,
Old voices speak to truth new orisons,
And beauty wakens in uncertain eyes.

LEROY SMITH, JR., University of Pennsylvania.

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